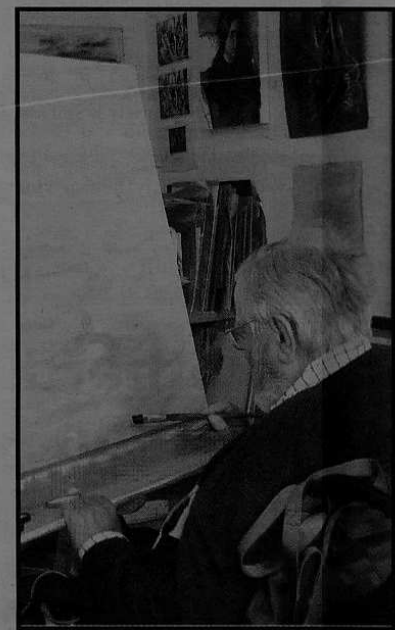


News

Cults, Culter and Milltimber

‘Good moaning!’ War vet chuckles at ‘Allo ‘Allo



THE ARTIST AT WORK: Jack Knight.

A WORLD War Two veteran living in Glasgow was recently offered the choice of visiting either Pitlochry Theatre or Culter Theatre Club's production of *Allo' Allo'* for his 90th birthday - and chose to see *Allo' Allo'* last Saturday.

It was a wise choice, as this turned out to be arguably the best production ever staged by the two-decades-old club.

The ninety-year old, Jim Blair (pictured right with two of the main characters) had since the 1940s been much involved in both acting and directing in amateur theatre in Glasgow and voted the Culter production as well-worth the travel north from the central belt.

In fact, there are no superlatives good enough to describe the stunning professional performance put on by CTC last week by the entire company in a stage version of the hugely popular comedy TV series *Allo' Allo'*. It is a daunting task for any actor to try to emulate popular television stars - some will try to succeed by completely changing the style and approach of a show, while others will try to faithfully re-enact the original cast's performances. CTC chose the latter approach, with such accuracy that within a few minutes of the curtain going up



it was impossible to remember that those onstage were not the comedy stars so well-known and loved by television audiences.

In an adults-only production, director Fergus Hardie created an hilarious and joyful production which gave all the cast the chance to show off their superb sense of comic timing which had spectators in what can only be described as fits of hysterical laughter at times. The 'naughty scenes' were carried out with such a sense of fun by the characters that it was impossible for anyone to take offence, and the show just seemed to get better and better as the night went on, finishing with a cheering standing ovation by the packed audience. One of the nice touches was that not only were the 150-strong crowd seated at tables to give the sense of being customers in "Rene's Cafe", but during the interval the cast went round the tables in costume and in character serving up platters of cheese and pate.

It would be impossible in the space of a small crit to mention every performance, so all were so beautifully drawn, but a word must be said for the central character, cafe owner Rene himself (played by Stuart McMain). Stuart usually plays the outrageous Dame in CTC's annual pantomime, but playing Rene gave the chance to display he has a much more sophisticated and subtle sense of comedy style as well. He was, in a word, a magnificent Rene, playing up to both fellow cast members and also (in his asides) to the audience as

well.

Allo' Allo' gave Culter Theatre Club the chance to show off the wealth of theatrical skills and expertise they have accumulated since the first pantomime show in 1992, and CTC fans can only hope that this seam of farcical comedy can be mined again in future productions. In addition, the production was also remarkably professional in the slick work carried out by stagehands and set construction.

A final touch was added to the show when, during the curtain calls, Rene stepped forward and asked the audience to donate to funds for Comic Relief Day - and this they did to the tune of just under £1000, for which CTC member Colin Jones said: "A huge thank you to all of our very generous supporters and fans - this was a fantastic total for Comic Relief."

Artist Jack back

SIMEON Homes in Bieldside, a care home for elderly people in need of special living assistance, will mark the start of a new development project aimed creating a new residential care home, a day centre and community hall for the elderly by holding a special art event

displaying the work of one of the residents, Jack Knight.

To be held on the evening of Friday, April 5, in St Martin's Hall on Cairnlee Road (off Baillieswells Road, Bieldside), the art event will display the works Jack Knight has painted while working with professional artist David Newbatt, an artist and teacher who lives and works at a Camphill Community for young adults with special needs in Aberdeen. David explains: "Jack came into Simeon Care in Bieldside in 2002 with his wife, Tina, who sadly passed away in 2006. His physical mobility, hearing, sight and memory have all steadily declined, leaving him at the age of ninety three largely dependent on others and unable to have independence. During this time of 'decline of freedom in daily life,' Jack has been coming to my studio to paint with me for many years. He comes up to my art studio in his wheel chair once a week, rain or shine and we always have a good chat and get a good amount of painting done, with a good cup of tea - apart from tea and chat, this space provides an important homeopathic dose of creative freedom in his life." He added that over the years Jack Knight has created some wonderful paintings - watercolours, acrylics, and big atmospheric landscapes in many themes including farming as Jack had been born into a farming family near Newmachar in 1919, though he gave up farming at age 50 to take up teaching.

Many of Jack Knight's works will be on sale at the art exhibition on April 5, at which there will also be cheese and wine with musical entertainment. Tickets at £10 can be purchased by contacting Caitlin Murphy on (01224) 865820, or emailing fundraising@simeoncare.org.uk - tickets are also available on the night of the event, which starts at 7.30pm, and funds raised will go towards Simeon's £2m New Lease of Life campaign.

Contact your Culter and Cults reporter Kathleen Robertson with all your news at: sunhoneycottage@btinternet.com or call her on (01224) 735501



ON STAGE: The cast of the show.